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050650Z Oct 04

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 002028

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W  
STATE FOR EB/ESC/IEC/ENR/BLEVINE  
STATE FOR DS/IP/AF  
STAT FOR INR/AA  
STATE PASS DOE FOR DAS JBRODMAN AND CGAY  
STATE PASS TREASURY FOR ASEVERENS AND SRENENDER  
STATE PASS DOC PHUPER  
STATE PASS TRANSPORTATION FOR MARAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/04/2009

TAGS: EPET CASC PGOV MOPS NI

SUBJECT: DELTA UPDATE FOR OCTOBER 4

Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for Reasons 1.5 (B & D)

Summary

¶1. (C) There have been no reports of fighting between the GON military and any of the informal militias in the Port Harcourt area. Press reported celebrations continued Saturday and Sunday in the streets of Port Harcourt due to the announcement of a tentative agreement between the federal government and the two rival rebel groups, the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and the Niger Delta Vigilante Group (NDVG). There are plans for the GON to meet with the rebel groups again on 8 October for further discussions. AGIP drew down personnel last week in what appeared to be a limited response to localized threats.

Security Update

¶2. (C) The Port Harcourt area remained peaceful over the weekend and into today. Asari, and to a lesser extent Tom, received heros' welcomes upon returning to Port Harcourt from Abuja. There were unconfirmed press reports that the GON has moved its military forces away from Asari's hometown of Buguma. Apparently, the military might have moved forces to Buguma while Asari was in Abuja for talks. This move was seen by Asari as a sign of bad faith by the GON.

¶3. (C) While Port Harcourt celebrated, there remained many unanswered questions regarding the communique issued in Abuja. Asari publicly stated that the pact with the government is contingent on the GON meeting its demands for a national conference, and for a degree of political autonomy and resource control. Government spokespersons have also been coy on divulging the details of any agreements reached between the GON and the militias.

Energy Sector Report

¶4. (SBU) According to a contact in Port Harcourt, average persons there welcomed the respite from the violence, and were reacting based only on their hopes. A Shell official stated the company was still cautious, but the situation was looking better. Shell is reviewing the security situation daily; Shell personnel still need armed escorts to move about Port Harcourt.

¶5. (C) We have credible reports that on September 30, AGIP removed some of its personnel and visiting Conoco Philips (CP) personnel (including about seven AMCITS) from two AGIP facilities around the Port Harcourt area in separate incidents. The move was due to sporadic shooting in the area of one facility, (SAIPEM) and a direct threat received by AGIP to the other facility. The SAIPEM fabrication facility is 5-8 kilometers south of Port Harcourt. Production was not affected by these withdrawals.

Press Report: Governor Announces Amnesty Plan

¶6. (C) Seeing his national political ambitions being tarnished, and perhaps feeling a bit irrelevant to the Abuja process, embattled River state Governor Odili made a weekend broadcast expressing happiness for the cease-fire, and promising to raise a special committee to assist in the rehabilitation and reintegration of aggrieved people. Odili reminded listeners that violence would only chase much-needed investment away from their region. The Governor reportedly granted amnesty to the militias if they turn in their weapons.

ACS Report

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17. (C) Seven AMCITs were evacuated safely from AGIP facilities (para five). There were no other reports of incidents involving AMCITs.

Comment

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18. (C) We are getting two distinct interpretations regarding the talks between the GON and the rebel groups. Some people are interpreting the communique as a sign of a final settlement between the parties. However, an NGO official who claims to have participated in the negotiations says the agreement is much more tentative and conditional. Asari's statements that the pact will be broken if the GON fails to recognize demands for a sovereign national conference and increased resource control lends credence to this less optimistic interpretation.

19. (C) What we can say for sure is that violence has diminished, and the GON and militants have talked. Although the communique was signed, we do not believe a binding, full agreement has been reached. The issues were too many and too important for an agreement to have been struck unless Asari has actually, albeit not publicly, capitulated on his demands. Nonetheless, the mood is positive, which will help to reduce tension and violence in the short term.

110. (C) Rivers state Governor Odili's announcement of an amnesty was another wild card. Thorny details of implementation were not thought out because Odili probably made the statement more for political posturing than to advance peace. Whether the program would extend to those guilty of killing civilians, police, or GON military must be addressed, as should the fundamental question of whether a state governor has this authority. As these details are fleshed out, the proposed amnesty program could boomerang on Odili. As with his relationship with Asari, it will not be the first time that Odili has suffered a strong backfire from his political machinations.

BROWNE